



1 Corinthians 7:1-16; 25-40



10

HOLINESS IN MARRIAGE AND SINGLENES



WEEK 10

Holiness in Marriage and Singleness

Chapter 7 marks a major transition in 1 Corinthians. Chapters 1-6 have been a response to a report brought to Paul concerning the church. In chapter 7 Paul turns his attention to “the matters you wrote about.” Paul has received a letter with a laundry list of questions. However, chapter 7 does not mark a hard break in Paul’s thought. Chapter 6 ended with the charge to “flee from sexual immorality” and to “honor God with your bodies.” This challenge seems to have been the cue in Paul’s mind to turn to their questions about sex and marriage. Apparently, the Corinthians have misinterpreted either Paul or some other teacher to be claiming that all sex is to be avoided. Paul seeks to correct this misunderstanding with a more robust view of marriage in view of the Kingdom of God.

The primary principle of this section is articulated in verse 24, “Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.” The idea here is contentment and focus on the Kingdom. The debate about whether it is more spiritual to marry or not to marry is misplaced. Paul says that our spirituality is not defined by our marital status. Singleness has a special usefulness for Christ, and marriage has a special usefulness. Everything has been reshaped by Jesus. If one wants to marry, great! If one wants to be single, great! In all things, glorify God with your life.

Daily Readings

- 01 1 Corinthians 7:1-9
- 02 1 Corinthians 7:10-16
- 03 1 Corinthians 7:25-40
- 04 Matthew 19:1-9
- 05 1 Peter 3:1-7
- 06 Romans 13:11-12
- 07 Ephesians 5:21-33



1 Corinthians 7:1-16

CONCERNING MARRIED LIFE

Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”² But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.⁵ Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.⁶ I say this as a concession, not as a command.⁷ I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

⁸ Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. ⁹ But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

¹⁰ To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹ But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

¹² To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.

¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

¹⁵ But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶ How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

CONCERNING UNMARRIED

Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.²⁶ Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is.²⁷ Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife.²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

²⁹ What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; ³⁰ those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; ³¹ those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

³² I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord.³³ But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—³⁴ and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. ³⁵ I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

³⁶ If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if his passions are too strong and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. ³⁷ But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. ³⁸ So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better.

³⁹ A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. ⁴⁰ In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

“If you read history, you will find out that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in.’ Aim at earth and you will get neither.”

C.S. LEWIS, *MERE CHRISTIANITY*



WARM UP

What word best describes your disposition?

- ☐ happy
- ☐ serious
- ☐ spontaneous
- ☐ encouraging
- ☐ matter of fact
- ☐ shy
- ☐ contemplative
- ☐ grumpy
- ☐ contentious
- ☐ indifferent
- ☐ other

Think about the following and how it applies to you:

“When I arrive at the place where all that I want is all that God desires for me, it is there that I find true peace and contentment.”

UNKNOWN

Note a few individuals and/or couples, married and single, who have inspired you in their devotion to God.

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-16; 25-40

Sexual immorality was an issue in Corinth and had, evidently, spilled over into the Corinthian church. Our culture has unhealthy views of sexuality, too. What are some ways we can avoid allowing immorality to become acceptable practice?

Paul asserts the importance of intimacy in marriage and the responsibility of both parties in making the relationship healthy. How does intimacy contribute to the emotional health and well-being of a marriage? Note that Paul says that Satan will exploit a relationship devoid of healthy intimacy.

Paul celebrates the blessing of singleness—even pointing out his own present circumstance (verses 8-9). How does he encourage the Corinthians to determine whether they should be married or remain single? Why?

How evident is it in verses 10-16 that Paul is committed to the sanctity of marriage? He acknowledges exceptions for divorce, as Jesus did (Matthew 19:9), but he encourages stability of marriage relationships, even if a believer is married to an unbeliever.

In verses 25-35, how does Paul celebrate the unmarried individual's devotion to the Lord, while not condemning marriage?

APPLICATION

Make a list of the present blessings in your life and thank God for each one. You may discover that things you once considered difficulties have become blessings.

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group.